

THE  
HAPPINESS  
OF  
BRETHRENS  
Dwelling together in  
UNITY.

DISCOURSED

Upon *PSALM 133. Vers. 1.* On  
*Occasion of the late Thanksgiving, Feb. 14. 1687.*

By *JOHN COLLINGES, D. D.*

L O N D O N,

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# T O T H E R E A D E R.

**F**Or the Divisions of Reuben are great thoughts [great searchings] of heart (saith the victorious Prophets, Jud. 5. 15, 16.) Reuben was one of the most Potent Tribes of Israel, you will find, Numb. 1. that upon their first Numbring, there belonged to it Forty six thousand five hundred fighting Men : Upon the second Numbring, Num. 26. Forty three thousand seven hundred, and thirty. They had their Portion on the other side of Jordan, and were by that River divided locally from their Brethren ; but that is not the Division here lamented. In a cause where the whole was concerned against a Potent Enemy, they could not unite, but abode amongst the Sheepfolds to hear the bleatings of the Flocks. The cause of this Neutrality is not told us, but what ever it was, it could not be justified, and caused amongst the more considerate amongst their Brethren, great thoughts, great searchings of heart, and not without reason : It is a just amazement to any, that any Men for a little Secular Profit and Advantage to themselves, should disunite from their Brethren in Councils, and Actions tending to the common preservation of the whole Body of which they are Members. This hath been our case in England for more than an Hundred years, Men to keep up their particular Dominations, grandeur, and Secular

## To the Reader.

*Gain and Interest have kept up Division to the apparent hazard of the whole, at least twice, or thrice, and this deserveth great thoughts, great searchings of heart. Being called to perform my part in the late Publick Thanksgiving, I knew not what better Subject to pitch upon, than the Commendation of Unity, with a Persuasive to it; because I thought this alone was a Real Thanksgiving, as well as most of any thing subservient to the good of the Nation. Every one calls for Unity, and reflects upon those who are (in their fancies) the hinderers of it, but they seem not to understand the way of Peace. Would they have an Unity in the Doctrines of Religion? Nothing less, they grant this unpracticable; nor will they themselves own the Articles of our Religion, further than as an Instrument of Peace, and with a Latitude for their own sense of them. Would they have an Union in Designs and Councils for the Publick Good, and in the performance of mutual Offices of love one towards another? To this all good Men will say Amen. Only, say we, this is inconsistent with any Persecution; for how do they shew their readiness to do all Offices of love one to another, who make it their business to ruine others, by Fines, Imprisonments, &c. Or how can they joyn in Actions for Publick Good, of whom you require (as the terms of such Conjunction) things that their Consciences tell them they cannot do without Sin? and others Consciences tell them are no way necessary for that end; but wholly foreign as to the thing for which they would have them unite? Would you have an Union to uphold the Protestant Religion? All honest Men are agreed for this. But, say they, (and truly too) you pluck up Protestant Religion by the root that day, that you deny to every Protestant, the Judgment of Discretion, which allows to every Man a liberty to Judge of his own Acts, whether they be such*



## To the Reader.

*as he may lawfully do, or may nor do. For if a Man may act contrary to the practical Judgment of his own Conscience, in compliance with the Commands, or Opinions of others, calling themselves The Church: The Papists have got a great Point of us, and seeing they have greater Numbers, and that of Learned men, than are of, and amongst Protestants, they grant it safer to be Papists than Protestants. Well, but say some, We would have such an Union that all may joyn together in Hearing, Receiving the Sacrament, &c. All good Men will say, Amen to this too; Provided, that they will allow all those who are true Ministers of Jesus Christ (if there be any in the World except amongst those of their Persuasions) to Preach and Administer the Sacraments: And Provided, There be nothing added to Preachings beyond what God hath revealed in his Word; nor to Prayers and Administrations of Sacraments beyond what God hath directed in his Word; which is a sufficient Rule for Worship as well as Doctrine, except as to the common Circumstances of all humane acts. We hear Men say, Will you allow nothing then to Humane Laws and Legislators? Tes, very much; 1. A Power to judge what is necessary and expedient in all Civil things for the upholding and managing the Civil Government. 2. A Power to inforce the Laws of God in Religious things. 3. A Power there also to determine the necessary Circumstances of those actions, so far as they are Humane Acts. ~~But by the granting of these things, so much of some mens craft is in danger to be set at nought; So much Magnificence (as some count it) in danger to be destroyed, that I despair ever to see such an Unity. Nor do I understand how it is necessary in order to Brethrens dwelling together in Unity, more than it is necessary to the Civil Union of a Corporation, that all Men in it should manage~~*

## To the Reader.

*use the same Trade by the same Method, and in the same Circumstances. If Men be united in their common Councils, Designs, and Readiness to serve the publick, for their common Good and Advantage, and a readiness to serve one another in love, it is enough for our Civil, and Secular Happiness: and if they be united in a common belief of all things necessary to be believed, and all things necessary to be done, in order to Salvation, it is Union enough in order to our Spiritual, and Eternal Happiness. The necessity of any other Union is a Chimæra fit only for such who cry out for Unity upon terms, upon which it is almost impossible it should be had, that is, they cry out for continued Discord, under the Notion of Unity, This, Reader, is that Union which the following Discourse pleadeth for, and directeth what seemeth to me the best means to attain. Now the God of Peace, which brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his Will, working in us, that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. To whom be Glory for ever and ever, Amen.*

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advancing of it, to commend to you the Union of the Church.

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**Psalm 133. vers. 1.**

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is, for*

*Brethren to Dwell together in Unity.*

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**W**E have not in the Title of the Psalm to ascertain a conduct to determine the occasion of the Penning of it, as we have in many other Psalms. It tells us indeed it was a Psalm of David, but upon what occasion Composed, it saith not. It is not improbably guessed that the occasion of the Penning, was the Union of all the Tribes in David their King, of which you read, 2 Sam. 5. 3. After the Death of Saul, David reigned some years over Judah alone; but you read there, that after he had reigned seven Years and three Months in Hebron over Judah alone, all the Elders of Israel came to him in Hebron, and made a league with him; and anointed him King over Israel; and thus now the twelve Tribes were become *Gens una*, one Nation. David might (very probably) upon this occasion Pen this Psalm, commending to them the keeping of this *Knar*, which God's Providence had made. Thus it excellently suiteth our present occasion, we being at this Day, in such an opportunity of uniting all that profess the Reformed Religion, as possibly our Forefathers for more than an Hundred years (till within our memory) have wanted, whether God will yet please to hide from us the things which concern our Peace, time must shew. However I could not but take the

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## The Happiness of Brethren's Dwelling

advantage of it, to commend to you the *Union of Brethren*. The words I have read to you is the *Proposition* of the whole *Psalms*, the Proof of it lyes in the last words, the other Verses are made up of two Similitudes, illustrating the general *Proposition*. The Proposition of the Psalm, is that which my design is to make the Subject of my Discourse, which I shall prove only, by opening the last Clause, *There God commands the Blessings*. The other Passages of the Psalm I shall no further concern my self in, than they will naturally fall under the proof of the Proposition.

Prop. *It is a very good, and pleasant thing for Brethren to dwell together in Unity.*

The Notion of *Brethren* in Scripture is of as great a Latitude as that of *Neighbour*. It signifies those that agree in *uno aliquo tertio*, in any third thing, whether it be *Blood* in a more general Notion, and thus all Men are Brethren each to other; or in a more restrained Notion, thus all of the same Family are Brethren; or in the same more immediate Parents, thus *Esaú* is called *Jacob's Brother*; or in the same Nation, thus *Paul* calls the *Jews* his Brethren; or in the same Religion; or finally in the same Faith, or hope of calling (as the Apostle phraseth it,) thus we are called to Love the Brethren. As to the particular sense of it in this Text, it doubtless signifies those that were Members of the same Nation, and United in the main things with respect to Religion.

It may be a more valuable Question, what Union this is predicated of. The *Heb.* saith no more than in One. I find some would have it only to respect Place.

But

But besides that, this was sufficiently express before, by the words *dwelling together*. Nor doth this always appear Productive of any Happiness, or Pleasantness. And if it did it would speak the Psalmist only here commending the Happiness of those who live in Towns, and Cities; contiguous one to another; above theirs, who live in the Country, or places where Mens Habitations are at greater distances; which is too mean a Notion to suit David's design in this Text. We must therefore find out some other Unity here intended.

*Unity* refers certainly to the *Mind*, and so there is a double *Unity*: The one referring to the *Understanding*, the other to the *Will* and *Affections*.

Unity so far as respecteth the understanding, is a *Oneness* in *Apprehension* and *Judgment*, which is consequent to it, for every Man must judge of the *truth* or *falsehood*, the goodness or badness of a Notion as he apprehends it. Now this is an *Unity* which is not to be expected, we may as soon look to see an *Oneness*, in the *likeness* of all mens faces, their features and complexions, as in their apprehensions, there must, and will be while the World lasts, different abilities in Men, to discourse Conclusions from Principles, as differences also in their Educations, and improvements of their Reasons; from whence Men and Womens apprehensions and judgments are formed. I doubt whether any such thing may be pray'd for: for what were it but to pray God to unmake the World; and to Cast all mens Souls in the same Mould; or to work some such miraculous change upon all; for neither of which I know of any Warrant. Besides, supposing that the *will must follow the dictate of the understanding*, it would (with a witness too) destroy all liberty of the will, which some so contend for. Nor do I know whether this would produce any such Happiness. Indeed there is an *Unity of Faith* that is desirable;

## *The Happiness of Brethrens Dwelling*

But that is secured by Mens rightly apprehending and Judging, in all things necessary to be believed and done in order to *Salvation*. But when shall we be agreed what those are? I do not think that Unity is at all concerned in my Text. It must therefore be *the Unity of the Will and Affections*. And this either respects, 1. *Designs and Councils*. Or, 2. *Offices of Love and Charity*. 1. Tho' Men as to particular Notions may have different apprehensions, and Judgments, yet they may have a *oneness of Will and Design* for the promotion of some general good, let it be, *the Glory of God*, or the *common good of the City or Community*, in which we are involved. Now there are two things which give a liberty for this, under different Apprehensions.

2. *That a Man may practise, according to, or contrary to many particular Notions, and yet glorify God, if he lives up to the Dictate of his own Conscience*. This the Apostle abundantly determines, *Rom. 14.* in the case of the Jewish Holy days and Meats. *v. 6.* *He that regardeth a day regardeth it to the Lord; [that is to the Glory of God] and he that regardeth it not, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, and giveth God thanks: and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.* Thus it is in all things which God's Word hath left indifferent. God's Glory is neither concerned, in the doing, or not doing of them. Those who think a Superiours command alters the case, should do well to consider whether Saint Paul might at that time, have by his command made it necessary for any Jew turn'd to the Christian Faith, to have kept the Jewish days, or to have forborn the Meats there spoken of. What shall he say (saith Solomon) that comes after the King, even the same thing that hath been said before? What shall God's Vicegerent say, or do, who in any thing cometh after the



the King of Kings; surely nothing but what hath been said before him (in the things of God) *commanding things necessary*, and *leaving things indifferent*, as God hath left them. I never read but that the good Kings of God's ancient People, and Paul and the rest of the Apostles did so not pretending to a Wisdom paramount to that of God.

2. A second thing is, *That in all Civil things, a man in Obedience to the higher Powers, may, and ought to do contrary to his own Opinion and Judgment*. The Reasons for this are obvious.

1. *He transgresseth no Law of God in doing it*. 2. *Nay, he obeyeth the Law of God in it*. Tho' the Law of God in Religious Matters obligeth every Man to follow the dictate of his own Conscience; judging a thing lawful or unlawful; (and in things indifferent judging a thing more, or less expedient; because in all such things next after God, a Man's practical Conscience is the Supreme Judge as to his actions. Yet in Civil Matters, the Higher Powers of States and Kingdoms are plainly Judges betwixt God and our practical Judgments; God hath clothed them with Power to make Laws, and determine of things necessary, or not necessary, expedient, or not expedient for the better managery of their particular Governments. That text, *Deut. 17* is to be restrained to such things, it is restrained, *17. 8.* to matters betwixt blood and blood, plea and plea, stroke and stroke, matters of Judgment, &c. and most impertinently urged further. Now suppose a Thousand Men, half of which judge such a Law for a Tax or a Custom, necessary or expedient; the other half judge it unnecessary, and inexpedient; they are none of them Judges of the public Good of a Nation or City; but the chief Magistrate, is by God left Judge in the case. What should hinder but that all these Men should Unite in their

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their Designs, Counsels, and Practice for the Publick Good. And this is the unquestionable Duty of them all.

2. A second Union referring to the *Will*, I call'd the *Union of Love and Charity*. That is, when all persons in any community are agreed in what they may, to do all Offices of Love each to other. I see nothing can hinder this, but Mens passions, and lusts, Pride, Envy, Malice, Harred of one another, &c. I hear some pleading for another Union, which they call an *Unity of Communion*, and expound by a resorting to the same Church to offer up united Prayers and Praises, and together to receive the Sacrament, and telling us, That an Union in Love, Charity, and mutual forbearance, is very difficult, when Men divide Communion, and why I pray? because Mens not joining in Communion one with other, is in effect a declaring them with whom we do not join, Heathens and Publicans. Now I must confess this is a Doctrine I cannot understand.

1. Is there then any Church to be found so large as to hold all Christians who are obliged to live together in Unity? But it will be said, tho' they meet in several places, yet they are one in their worship?

2. Very well; but what is meant by *Worship*? only the *specificcal*, tho' not their *indivoidal* acts of *Worship*: Or one in all the *Rites and Modes of their Worship*? If the first only be intended, all good Christians are in *Unity*: I know of none but worship God by *Prayer, Praises, receiving the Sacraments, &c.* Must it needs be an Union in all the *Rites, and Modes of Worship*?

3. In the first place, There was never such an *Unity*, either in the *Primitive Churches*, or betwixt the *Reformed Churches*: Could they not therefore love another?

2. If there must be such an *Unity* for which I see no reason, What Church shall be the Standard to which all others

others shall Unite? Why should the Church of God in Scotland more Unite, so that in England, than that in England so that in Scotland? Shall the Word of God over-rule? Then all are bound to Unite to that Church which performs all its Acts of Worship most conformably to the Divine Rule. To this I know no Dissenter but will willingly say, Amen.

4. But it is yet much more un-intelligible, how Christians (not joyning with others in the same Modes, and Rites of Worship) should be in effect a declaring them to be as Heathens and Publicans, and Persons out of a state of Salvation. This,

1. In the first place proclaims to the World, that those that are of this Mind not joyning with Nonconformists in publick Prayers and Praises, and in the Sacraments, is in effect a declaring them Heathens and Publicans, and not in a state of Salvation.

2. I cannot understand the Divinity of this Assertion. May not Christians chuse to joyn in Communion with one Congregation, and adhere to that alone, and yet think others Christians, and in a state of Salvation? this is certainly both a new, and false Notion. It is not enough for to justifie me to joyn with other Christians, that Salvation may be had amongst them. I am further obliged to joyn my self with such where the Ordinances are so administred as my Conscience tells me will be most to my comfort, and Edification, and as I judge, is nearest to the Divine Rule. I know that in all cases a Christian is not always obliged to do what is best, but that in the Worship of God he is not so obliged, is more than I, or I suppose any thinking Divine will assert. But I have dwelt upon this too long. He who doth not think himself and his Church Infallible, may easily allow others to be Christians, and in a state of Salvation, that do not in some Rites and Modes (of which

which the Word of God saith nothing) follow him, and those with whom he chooseth to walk. If any do think themselves infallible, and fit to make a *Standard* to the World, they certainly think of themselves, above what they ought to think; or can think with any degree of Humility. I conclude, That it is the Duty of all Christians (agreed in things necessary to Salvation) to be at Duty one with another so far, as mutually to Unite all their Councils and Studies, and Practices in things which concern the Glory of God, and the common good of the place wherein they dwell together, tho' they may differ in some private Opinions; and such differences may oblige them not to walk together, in those things wherein they are not agreed, and to be ready to do all good offices one to another, both *adversus invidiam*, maintaining what they apprehend (tho' differently) to be Truth in Love; and *seruando* one another in love. Nor is there a greater difficulty in this, than what attends all *Self Denial*, without which we cannot be the Disciples of Christ, who so can deny himself in malice, and hatred against such as he judgeth stricter than himself, and in *Pride*, thinking that it is possible he may be mistaken, may easily overcome this difficulty; which is no more than every one must meet with, that will come in Heaven. Though Calvin would not joyn in Communion with Luther, yet he not only loved him, but own'd him as an eminent Servant of God, and profess'd he would so acknowledge him, though he should call him a Devil, (such was the Sweetness and Evangelicalness of that excellent Man's temper) This I say, is our Duty to be as the Apostle phraseth it, *Rom. 12. 10. Kindly affectioned one to another in love*; But it is not my Business to demonstrate this (tho' it were very easie) but my work is to shew you the Happiness of such a dwelling together. The Text saith it

is happy and pleasant; About the latter I shall not labour: The pleasantness of such a dwelling together, is obvious to sense: to see any Society of Men and Women, ready to spend, and be spent for one another, to serve one another in love in all mutual Offices, is pleasant to every Eye, but that which is envious, which nothing pleaseth that is another's good. I shall make it my only business to demonstrate the Happiness of such a Life, which I shall do in several Particulars.

1. It is the only Humane Life. A Life of discord, and division, biting and devouring one another, continual Feuds and Quarrels, is a Brutal Life. Amongst living Creatures, some are under the meer conduct of Sense and Appetite, such are the Beasts of the Field; Others (such is Man) are under the conduct of reason and government of that, which God hath planted in Man to rule and govern his sensitive appetite, and restrain it in those Exorbitancies to which since the Fall it is very prone, and to reduce the Soul to its Primitive order; hence you see that divers Beasts can hardly be one with another, or meet one with another, but they are gnawing each at other, biting, or devouring, or pushing one another; but with Men it is otherwise, and amongst Men railing, and reviling, fighting, and quarrelling are generally found in the meaner sort of Men not cultivated by Education, or ill-bred. The only Humane Life is a Life of Amity and Unity. It speaketh such Men to have most recovered the Image of God in Man (so far as it concerns Reason.) And if it be any Happiness to Men, to have recovered this, and to have attained to an ability to live like Persons possess of reasonable Souls: This Happiness those Brethren have who have learnt so far to deny their Lusts and Passions, as to live together in Unity.

2. Secondly,



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2. Secondly, *It is the only good that extendeth it self to many.* We say in Philosophy, that all Good is diffusive, and by how much any thing is more common, or more communicative, the better it is. There is no such thing in nature as a clung, hide-bound Good, that only feedeth upon it self; or, if you will, *It is the only good that is productive of Goodness*: For if *Dives* fareth deliciously every day, if he hath not a bit of Meate, or a piece of Money to give a *Lazarus*, his Riches are no good (truly so call'd) at least they are productive of no goodness at all. Now take all other things we call Good, they only serve single Persons, without this dwelling together in Unity, being kindly affectionated to, and freely serving one another in love. This is such a Good, as is a fruitful Mother, which many call Blessed, because it gives a Portion to six and also to seven. This is one thing by which the Psalmist demonstrates the excellency of Unity, when he compareth it to the precious Ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, and did not wet Aaron's head alone, but ran down to the skirts of his Garment. Take all other things which we call good, Riches, Honour, Learning, they only give single Persons an Happiness, and that very imperfect; this living together in an Union of Councils and Designs for one anothers welfare, and a being kindly affectionated one to another, and ready to serve one another in love, is a common Good to all that live in such an Union.

3. The Third and greatest demonstration is in the last words of the Psalm, *There God commandeth the blessing.* That is an happy Society upon which God commandeth the Blessing; but on these Societies it is that God commandeth his Blessings.

The next Question is, what Blessings they are which God commandeth upon Societies of Persons dwelling together



gether in such an Unity, as I have been describing to you; and here, --- *Inopem me copia fecit*, I shall more easily know where to begin, than where to end. All Blessings that Mankind is capable of, refer either to the outward or to the inward Man: I shall discourse both apart, beginning with those that refer to the outward Man.

1. And the first in Riches, and all outward Prosperity. This I take to be hinted by our Psalmist, that Similitude, It is like the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the Mountains of Zion; the Dew made the Mountains full of Grass, Corn, Wine, and Oyl. We may apply to this dwelling together in Unity, what Solomon saith of Wisdom; Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand Riches and Honour. The Health of the Body Natural depends upon the Unity of the Humours; and the Health of the Body Politick equally depends upon the Union of the Members of it. It hath been observed, that where the Popish Inquisition hath come, it hath spoiled all the Wealth and Trade of the place, the reason is, because it hath spoiled the Unity of the whole, for the Unity of a part. On the contrary, where a Liberty hath been granted for Mens various Opinions in Religion and Practice suitably, those places have abounded in Riches, (of which our Brethren in the Low Countries is a demonstration very near us). And for this, a great deal of reason is to be given,

1. From the Will of God. Places where People live together in Unity, are places where God hath declared he will command the Blessing; now those whom he blesteth shall be blessed. Solomon saith in one place, *The diligent hand maketh rich*; in another, *Prov. 10. 22. The blessing of God maketh rich*, and he addeth no sorrow therewith. The curse of God, may make Rich; but Sorrow will be added to those Riches: God

in the ordinary course of his Providence, doth not bless a People with Riches that live in Discord; and perpetually biting and devouring of one another.

2. A second Reason may be, *The Contribution which Unity makes to Riches*. Riches ordinarily are gotten by some Trade and Dealing with others; now no Man tradeth alone, there is (as I think *Cicero* calls it) *quædam connexio rationum*, a connexion of several Mens ways of living, which must make up a Trade; and this (to become profitable) requires so much Boldness, and mutual Confidence, as can be in no place where Men do not dwell together in Unity: and this must be true, as to all that part of Trade which is at home. Besides, where Men live together in Discord, and Enmity, all their Studies are to ruin and devour one another without Pity, (we have had too late an Experience of it for some years) and it is the keener, and more edged, where one Party can be perswaded, that in what they do, they do God Service, and the mad cry can be raised for the *Holy Cause* (as it is in some Popish Countries) it presently puts the People in uproar, and no man is secure; because, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*. On the other side, where Men live together in Unity, every one trades freely according to his Talent, and is not afraid of a Gaol, whiles he lives justly and honestly, every Man willeth well to his Neighbour, helps, adviseth, assisteth him, reposeth mutual Confidence in him, &c. There is a Precept of the Apostle, *1 Cor. 10. 24.* than which there is none more useful to Mankind, *Let every man not seek his own, but anothers wealth;* that is, not his own only: and where it is not put in practice, a short time makes a City a Corporation of Beggars; for there must be more than one, to make one thrive; where there is *Discord, Hatred, Envy, Malice,* seeking advantages against, biting, devouring of one another; few or none grow

grow rich, but such as live by all Arts, upon the Spoils of others, and those are such ill Plants in a Community, as the justice of God seldom will allow to grow to any height, where Men dwell together in this *Unity*, every Man is, as a Journeymen to his Neighbour, and lending him his hands to be rich. You see it in a small Society of Friends, there always attendeth it, a being kindly affectionated one to another, a forbearing one another in love, a serving one another. So many true Friends as a Man hath, so many Servants he hath. *Concordia parva res crescit*, little Estates grow great by it. Discords nourish none but Birds of Prey, that can digest the Blood and Flesh of others.

2. A second Blessing consequent to this Brethrens dwelling together in Unity, is *comfortable Society* and fellowship. This is the life of Mens lives, for Man is a sociable Creature, and as it is not good for him to be alone, so naturally he loves to live in a Society. How miserable doth that Man judge himself, who is shut up in a Prison where none must come at him? Experience tells us how miserable the life of Persons in a Family is, for want of Conjugal, Parental, and Filial love, and if you go out of those Doors, you will find it the same, for want of Neighbourly love. Two may walk together tho' they be not agreed, but it will be no pleasant walk. There is no Pleasure in a litigious Snarling Society, but how sweet is the Society of Persons kindly affectionated one toward another, and ready upon all occasions to serve one another.

3. A third more external Blessing is *mutual and cordial assistance*. God hath created us in a Connection with, and a dependancy upon one another. In my course of life in the World, I have made this observation, I never yet knew a Prince so great, but at one time or other he hath found that he hath had need of his Peoples

Hands, and Purfes; nor private Person so sufficient to himself, but he hath had need of his poorest Neighbours: This requireth *Unity* amongst Brethren. Solomon tells us, *Eccles. 4. 10.* Two are better than one; for if one falleth, the other will lift him up: but wo to him that is alone, for if he falleth, he hath none to lift him up. If two lye together, they shall have heat, but how can one be warm that is alone? and if one prevail against him two shall withstand him, and a threefold Cord is not quickly broken. The many Companies and Partnerships, with which the World, abounds in carrying on Business of Trades, are a sufficient proof of this.

4. A fourth more outward Blessing, is *Stability* and *Consistency*. The abiding of all compounded Bodies doth very much depend upon the union of their several parts one with another. Thus it is in the Body Natural, thus it is in Buildings, thus it must be in all Compositions. Thus it is in Bodies Politick, *Math. 12. 25.* The house divided against it self cannot stand. Let the condition of a State, a Kingdom, any Society, be never so flourishing, it cannot abide longer than the Union of the principal Parts of it do abide: *Vix unita fortior*, A firm Union of several things of the same kind, makes all their Strength and Virtues one; and many Eyes see more than one, and many Hands can do more than one; hence is the stability of the Prosperity of all such Societies, which is a great Blessing. I will add but one more.

5. That shall be *Success in Business*. Discord clogs the wheels of all publick Councils and Actions: Let it be Business of War, or Peace, of what nature soever it be for a publick good, it must move slowly and with small success, whiles those concerned in it, have divided Ends and Counsels, and draw diverse ways. I observe, that when God promised Prosperity and Success to his ancient People, in order to it, he promised that

the stick for the house of Judah, and the stick for the house of Joseph should be made one stick; Ezek. 37. 16, 17, 18. This is enough to shew you what external Blessings God commands, where Brethren dwell together in the Unity I have described.

But yet the flood of Spiritual Blessings commanded, and brought by this dwelling together in Unity, is much greater, and much more valuable. Let me open this in a few particulars.

1. *It is the only Christian life.* A life of Unity, is not only the life of a Man who is endued with a reasonable Soul, and should walk under the conduct, and government of it, but it is the *life of a Christian*, who by his Name is obliged to fulfil the Law of Christ, and not to walk after the flesh, but after the spirit. No Man or Woman can live up to the Law of Christ, but he, or she, that dwells with their Brethren in Unity. The Apostle speaking of himself and others, whiles they were in a state of unregeneracy, describeth their life thus, *Tit. 3. 3. We our selves* were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts, and pleasures, living in malice, and envy, hateful and hating one another. The Law of God is a Law of Love and Unity, and further extensive than to those that follow us. *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self* (said the old Law, *Levit. 19.*) and the Law of Christ is the Royal Law of Love. *This is my Commandment* (saith our Saviour, *Job. 13.*) *that you love one another.* The Apostle, *Gal. 5.* reckoneth up the fruits of the flesh, and the fruits of the Spirit, he tells you the works of the flesh are--v. 20. *Hatred, Variance, Wrath, Strife,* v. 22. the fruit of the Spirit, is *Love, Peace.* If it be the Happiness of any People, to have recovered the Image of God, and to be arrived at the life of Christians, this Happiness they are arrived at, that dwell together in Unity.



## The Happiness of Brethrens Dwelling

2. It is a life in which a world of Sins, (and those the blackest of Sins) are avoided. No People live with less guilt of Sin upon their Souls, than those that are so far reconciled to the whole Creation, as to be kindly affectionated one to another in love, and ready in love to serve one another in love. By this *Pride* is avoided, by which alone cometh contention (saith Solomon.) Love argues that a Man thinks of himself as he ought to think, as a poor fallible Person, that may be mistaken as well as his Neighbour, and therefore can love his Neighbour tho' he be not in all things of his Mind, and doth not in all things follow him. *Envy, malice, hatred, thinking evil of, and wishing evil to his Neighbour* are all avoided by this dwelling together in Unity. Since we in *England* have broke loose from this Rule, observe into what Exorbitances we have fallen, and debauched our selves to a degree, hardly to be believed of Christians; from hence have come our new phrased Healths to the *Damnation, Confusion* of others. (*Blessed God!* were ever such things heard of before amongst a People that ever owned *Christ*, or his Gospel.) But it is no wonder that Men who have not so far learned *Christ* as to *love one another*, but think every little difference in an Opinion, or Practice a sufficient ground to hate another, should be so far taught by the *Devil*, as to *hate one another*, and wish the worst of Evils to them, contrary to all Rules of *Idumantity* as well as *Christianity*. Let me further add, these are not only Sins, but of all Sins the blackest, next to Blasphemy against God, and his Holy Spirit. Our Saviour, *Math. 5.* hath taught us, that they fall under the Prohibition of that Precept. *Thou shalt do no Murder*, and his beloved Disciple tells us after him, *That he who hateth his Brother, is a Murderer, and no Murderer hath Eternal life.*



3. By this life much advantage is taken away from our grand Adversary. The Apostle tells us, *1 Pet. 5. 8. Our Adversary the Devil, goeth about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour.* He is a cruel Adversary, therefore compared to a *Lion, a roaring Lion, one seeking whom he may devour*; He is a diligent Adversary, not like a Lion in his Den, that needs one to rouse him up, he is *up* going about and seeking for his Prey; yea, he is also a subtil Adversary, that hath *Wiles, Methods, Devices*; nor doth he take a greater advantage of any thing, than the *coilings of our Passions.* The Apostle was jealous of his taking advantage of the *Corinthians, 2 Cor. 2. 11.* upon this account he there adviseth the restoring the incestuous Person upon his Repentance. If you ask me what Advantages the Devil is spoiled of, by this life of Unity? I answer, all the Advantages that he hath from *hatred*, to move us, to do unto others what we would not be willing they should do us, whether by Word or Deed. It is the Precept of the Apostle, *1 Tim. 5. 14. Give no occasion to the Adversary.* The Evil Spirits discerning the want of love in us, giveth him a fair advantage to tempt us to revile, nickname him, wound his Reputation, to rejoice in Evil betiding him, to spoil him of his Goods, his Life, &c. Fourthly,

4. This living together in Unity, opens a door for great spiritual advantage one to another. I will open this but in Four things.

1. It is the nearest way, to bring us to Union in Judgment and Opinion, and so to a perfect communion each with other. We have been these many years, complaining of Separation, calling for Peace and Union. But what courses have we taken to bring it about? Each Party hath been disputing for his differing Notion: and where this hath been done nervously and calmly, the most rational means hath been used, but we have seen little good

good effect of it, by reason of Mens *Pride* and *Prejudice*, we have rather contended for *Mastery* than for *Truth*. Another parcel of Men have fell to *railing* and *reviling*, calling Men *Schismatics*, *Hereticks*, *Papists*, *Formalists*; now this hath been just as proper a means to bring Men to dwell together in *Unity*, as it would be to persuade others to live in the same House with us to call them *Knaves*, and give them all the *brutish Language* we could. Of late we have thought nothing would do it but *Violence*, and accordingly we have been filling *Gaols*, rising *Houles*, &c. Thus the *Spaniard* hath got an *Unity* where he hath to do, by depopulating his *Country*. Had we instead of these *fiery counsels*, but agreed in this, That whether we agreed in every *Notion* or no, or met at the same place to worship God by the same *Rites*, yea, or no, we would unite in *Counsels* for the *Glory of God*, and the *good of the Community* in which we are involved, and be ready to do all offices of *love one to another*, we might by this time have better understood one another, and all that truly agreed in the same end of glorifying God, would (probably long ere this time) have agreed in the directest means in order thereunto. I am sure we have hitherto took the wrong way to peace.

2. It would open a great Door for the *conversion of others*. I do not mean *Conversion to an Opinion* (that's a lamentable thing) but *conversion from Sin unto God*. Upon this Argument, the great Apostle of the Gentiles  
 1 Cor. 3. 16. persuades the *believing Wife to abide with the unbelieving Husband*, and the *believing Husband to abide with the unbelieving Wife*. *What knowst thou, O Wife, but that thou mayst save thy Husband?* &c. God is love, and so much the God of love, and the worst Men have so right a *Notion of God* in this case, That they cannot believe God is amongst a *Society of Men*, where is nothing but  
 fighting

fighting and scratching, railing at, and reviling of one another, who yet are in Religion Brethren.

It maketh some so Mad, that they will rather choose to go to *Hel* than to Heaven with such Company (as they say the *Indian* did; rather than to keep the *Spaniard* company to Heaven). Offices of Love are great part of those good Works to which the Apostle *Peter* 1 Pet. 2. 12 exhorts, *that others may see them, and glorify God in the day of their Visitation.* The *Papists* (who have as little reason as any to boast of it) make *Unity* the note of a true Church. The truth is, they have no *Unity* but what is the product of *Tyranny*. I doubt not but there is many a Soul in Heaven, to whom the ancient brotherly love amongst Christians, was a great means to bring them thither: and many a Soul in Hell, to whom the discords and violences of Christians one against another, hath been a great occasion of their keeping in that broad Way that leads to that bottomless pit.

3. It opens a Door for all those mutual spiritual assistance by which one Christian may be advantaged by another; whether they be Instructions, Counsels, Admonitions, Reproofs, &c. That they are our Duty, appears from *Colos. 3. 16.* *Gal. 6. 1.* *2 Thess. 3. 15.* Now where Men dwell not together in that *Unity* I have described, little or nothing of this is done, at least with any good success, and effect: he that apprehends himself hurt by his Brother, will not be very patiently reproved, or admonished, or instructed by him: but he who loveth his Brother loves him, yields an obedient Ear to a wife Reproof, and balm with Devotion. *Let the Word of the Lord dwell in you, and be a kindness, and let one reprove one, it shall be an excellent Oil, which shall not break by Strife.*

Lastly, It gives the great advantage of mutual Prayers one for another. Those Prophane Persons, that think

to the *Damnation, Confusion, Destruction* of others, let you know how they pray for one another, that do not dwell together in *Unity*. Now as little as the irreligious part of the World judge to be of advantage from the Prayers of others, it appeareth *Paul* was not of their Mind, by his too often begging the Christians Prayers who were many degrees his Inferiours. The Apostle 1 Pet. 3. 7. presseth the Duty of *Husbands* to their *Wives* upon this Argument, *That your Prayers be not hindered*. It is a great Evil to any Society of Christians, that hindereth their Prayers one for another; and by a Parity of Reason whatever promoteth and advantageth such Prayers, must be a great good, and of a great advantage. But I shall dwell no longer upon the Doctrinal part of my Discourse.

*Use 1.* This Notion in the first place may serve to convince you, how great a cause you have this day to meet, and give Thanks to the God of Heaven. It is true, there are two ways, either of which if you look, you will see reason to Rejoice with trembling.

1. If you look upon the Enemies which we have abroad. There is no doubt but that *Nimrod*, that mighty hunter before the Lord, who hath driven all Protestants out of his Dominions, hath as good a mind to drive them all out of the World; and there is as little doubt but that there are abundance of Priests and Jesuits who make it their design in all places where they lurk.

2. And it is as melancholick a Prospect if we look upon the Sins of the Nation, and the Numbers of such, all whose Protestant Religion lyes in their Praying against any Reformation. I say, if we look at this, we may see some cause to say, Can a pure and holy God share so prophane, so vile, and sinful a People as this? Shall not our Earth disclose her Blood? Shall it cover her slain Innocents? Our Feares are not vain, nor is our State secure.

There is yet room for *Fasting and Prayer*, and bitter mourning before the Lord, if the bitter Cup may possibly pass over.

But we have this Day at least three eminent, and undeniable Causes of Thanksgiving.

1. *That so great a Revolution of Divine Providence is thus far passed over, with so small a shower of Blood.* Very few Weeks have passed, since every of our Hands were upon our Loins, and we stood in a trembling Expectation of what would be the issue of that great Commotion which we saw. The Effusion of much Protestant Blood was the least of our Expectations, the dreadful consequent of a Victory by Blood with reference to the Protestant Interest over all the World, was a much more terrifying Speculation. Now that God should do what is done with the shedding of so little Blood, certainly deserveth their Thanksgivings, who have any Kindness for the Protestant Interest.

2. *The Deliverance of the Nation from so great a degree of fear, as the most were under as to their best and highest Concern is another thing.* I know Popery had not over-ruled, nor was it the topping Religion of the Nation, nor like to have been in a short tract of Time. But we know that there is in us all a desire to Propagate our own Sentiments in Religion, and we cannot but judge that Princes who have more Power, have greater Temptations, tho' not advised by such as are restless, in such a design. God indeed hath far blessed the Preaching of the Gospel, that the most Peoples Palates are spoiled for such Lamp Oil, as their Doctrines of *Transubstantiation, Purgatory*, and many other absurd tenets of that Religion; nor was England to be hurried into a Conformity to them, by such wooden Tools, as came to do it, they must have been Persons of more Learning and Parts too, that could have promoted themselves any sudden Suc-



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cells. Nor were their Numbers any way proportionable for any such work as their Conversion of three Nations in their usual Methods of Conversion by Fire and Sword; But we must have lived in fear of such a dismal change, and died in a greater for our Posterity. From these (blessed be God) we are in a great measure delivered, and the Bondage of Fear is no inconsiderable Bondage. This also giveth us an apparent Cause of Thanksgiving, *That we may now serve the Lord without fear.*

But there is yet a third, and possibly that not the least cause of rejoycing before the Lord this day. *That we have now the fairest opportunity offered us for the Union of Protestants in these Nations, amongst themselves, and with our Brethren of other reformed Churches, that ever our Eyes saw, and beyond whatever our Forefathers could tell us of.* I mean by the Exclusion of the *Romish Party*, from any influence upon our Courts and Councils, who so readeth the History of our Ecclesiastical Affairs for 130 years last past, may see just reason to admire, that instead of making further steps forward we have rather seemed to have gone backward. In Doctrine indeed we had a very considerable Reformation, and so in *Worship*, in Discipline very little, and that directed by some particular Statutes, tho that was by our first Reformers as truly intended as the other, and at least 4 Acts of Parliament made to Authorize the *Kings of England* to appoint *Canonizans* for it, and something was done of this Nature, but that blessed Prince *Edw. 6.* died before he had given it his *Royal Sanction*; since whole time, nothing hath been done in it; this we are told hath been by the mighty influence upon our Court, which the *Romish Party* had, who possibly might labour to keep up their old *Forms of Discipline*, so far as our *Statute Laws*, and *King's Prerogative* would allow them, if peradventure they might ever gain an opportunity to

use



use them before their turn: This hath been one great  
 Cause of our Disunion of Protestants among themselves.  
 Another Cause rooteth in our *Misconception of Marriage*. In  
 the beginning of our Reformation so much of the ancient  
 Forms, Rites and Ceremonies were retained: (as was pro-  
 vided) to give the People into our Communion. This  
 did something for them in the care of Queen Elizabeth  
 but when their *Royal Father* dissolved the contrary, it  
 would do no longer. *Thomas Lambard* made a *force*  
*show* in and there so penned, that they might equally  
 serve as force in all *Protestants*. And as more Laws  
 were made for occasion during the Treasons of the *Scottish*  
*Party* still such Words and Phrases were taken as  
 made them (at least in the judgement of some Judges)  
 applicable to Protestants. At last it came to pass that they  
 were distressed with much more force against *Brevel*  
*And* *them* against *Protestants*. This also was changed upon  
 the Influence of a *Pope's* Party, laid upon our Court, and  
 Councils. Well, God hath by a stupendous Providence  
 delivered us from any such Influence: so that I say, here  
 is a large Door for this Unity offered, I am even sure  
 our Fathers like, and this is a great Blessing, to be  
 accepted with all thankfulness. If this blessing be given us  
 it will be so great a Happiness, I have no word to  
 it. *God* hath done my hopes and expectation.  
 What therefore remains but that I should per-  
 fect all you that hear me this day, with a *word*  
 to so great a piece of Happiness. *God* be with you.  
 In order to this, I shall offer you a few Arguments,  
 and then conclude with a few words of advice, so counsel-  
 ed. I beseech you to bestow upon this Opportunity  
 have already left. There are two more which I wish  
 the Memory of many should beget. That is, the  
 year when the Nation was brought in their *Synod*  
*God* was restored in a most stupendous manner. One  
 instance in five or six years.

might have thought, that the Expectation of more  
 Calamities might have moved them to Religious Endeavours,  
 might have prompted all our uncles and  
 vounts to Unite all Protestants, but instead of it, we made  
 so ill a use of this Opportunity, that our Divisions were  
 vastly increased by Anno 1643. the *Act of a Sacrament* or better  
 particular in 1644. *Decree* was taken, and since upon this  
 Discovery of the *Popish Plot* we have seen that all  
 Protestants were equally called *Heresies* on this, our  
*Bishops*, *Deacons*, were disposed of by Men of the  
*Romish persuasion*. Was it not the time to unite all Pro-  
 testants, who lost that Opportunity likewise, and after  
 that the Designs were more, and the Zeal hotter than  
 ever, to root out all Protestants who could not unite  
 in the *Establishment* of Warship and Discipline. The  
 loss of these Opportunities hath also been char-  
 ged upon the potent Influence Men of the *Romish Reli-  
 gion* had upon our *Church and Subjects*, and this attain  
 their Influence was great, how far they used it to this  
 end, I cannot tell. For my own part, I had given over  
 England for lost, at least the Uniting of Protestants for  
 lost. I despised all seeing any thing would save those  
 whom so pitifulous a Restoration with a Delivrance  
 from so pernicious and general a Plot would not save.  
 God hath out-done my hopes and expectation, and gi-  
 ven us this third Opportunity, if we lose this too, The  
*Interpretation* is, that this *Interim* and the *Reformation*  
 of our God, and Nation. *Demigod* is now a *new* of  
 1643. Secondly, Let me desire you to reflect upon the  
 sad Consequences of the loss of those two *fishments* mentioned  
 particularly, first and second, War with our  
 Brethren of *other* *denominations*, the only Bulwark of our  
 Religion, such a Plague as no man's Father ever  
 knew. The burning of the City of *London* and many  
 other Towns and Cities. The ruining of many good  
 lands for Nonconformity.

What

When were the Consequents of abolishing Superstition  
 second opportunity to the cruel, and barbarous usage of  
 those that dared to tell our King and his Parliament, that  
 there were those had conspired their ruin, the death of  
 sinners worthy Persons, the Flogging and Imprisonment  
 of others, the Subverting the Government of our Parlia-  
 ment, the Interpreting Laws to a sense never before  
 heard of, for purpose to ruin a great Party of Protes-  
 tants, &c. If we should lose a third opportunity, we  
 may easily prophesie the Consequents are like to be  
 much more fearful and dreadfull than the first and second.  
 Thirdly, Let the Union of your Kingdoms move  
 you. The Papists are hardly United, so much in any  
 one thing, as their great will and zeal to destroy us,  
 whom they call Hereticks, and indeed we worship the  
 God of our Fathers after the way they call Heresie.  
 Shall not we Unite to preserve ourselves?  
 Lastly, Let me tell you, *this will be a real  
 Thanksgiving*, either praising God is but in word, and  
 in Tongue only, but loving one another is the command  
 of our Lord, productive of a great deal of good and  
 glory to God, and impeditiv of a World of sinfull  
 You will all grant me this, but you will say, How  
 may this thing be? For what may we do in order to the  
 attaining such a happiness? In the general, as  
 there is nothing but our proceeding from the divine Rule,  
 which hath caused our Divisions, so there is nothing but  
 a return to that Rule which will ever bring us in an U-  
 nion. Our Divisions have been partly in matters of  
 Religion and Obedience towards God, partly in our Ci-  
 vil and Politick Government, and partly in our  
 former have order, right, and advantage, the  
 latter I will shew to be most in large with reference to  
 the former, and then you shall see the Division from  
 the divine Rule hath been the cause of those Divisions.  
 I will shew in five or six particulars.

And though it shall be *Superior* making those things ne-  
 cessary by their Commands, which by themselves are to  
 be indifferent and Nature indifferent, and this in matters  
 of Worship and Religion. That in case the Superior judg-  
 eth a thing necessary, he ought to command it, whose  
 nature under his jurisdiction is on all hands granted.  
 What he apprehends by God Commanded to be done or  
 forbidden in matters of his Worship, he must command  
 or forbid, for he is Gods Vicegerent, and ought to en-  
 force his Laws, tho' the Subject hath other apprehen-  
 sions of it, and tho' it may be the Superior be mistaken  
 in his Notion, for he must Act according to the dic-  
 tates of his own Conscience, and in this case the Infe-  
 rior who judgeth otherwise, hath nothing to do but  
 patiently to suffer. In Civil things, tho' the thing be  
 in it self indifferent, yet the Magistrate may command  
 it, because he judgeth it necessary or expedient for his Ci-  
 vil Government. And he is Judge of such necessity or  
 expedience, not the Inferior, but it is otherwise in mat-  
 ters of Religion, there is no Judge Superior to a Mans  
 Conscience but God alone. To God in his word hath not  
 left sufficient particular directions for the upholding and  
 well beings of States and Kingdoms, but he hath left us  
 only general Rules for Justice and Equity, and made the  
 Magistrate judge of things necessary or not necessary,  
 expedient or inexpedient as to that, and clothed him  
 with a Power to make and execute Laws in order to that  
 end. In Matters of Religion and Worship, God hath left  
 sufficient Rules in his Worship for the Preservation and  
 Government of his Church, and for all Christians to pay  
 homage to him, which he will accept, performed accord-  
 ing to them, nor is there any thing further necessary, but  
 the common Circumstances of all Humane Actions to  
 be applied to these Religious Acts; neither is there  
 any thing so indifferent, but may by some Circumstances  
 become

become unlawful, either to greater numbers, or to particular persons in regard of their different apprehensions of it. The Superiour is as much obliged by the Law of charity, as the Inferiour, and cannot set a step in that way wherein he cannot walk charitably. Besides, Christians observation, that there is no president either in the *Old Testament* or *New*, of Superiours either in Church or State, taking away that liberty of people which God had left them in matters relating to their homage to God, is no small Topick to persuade them, that as the Superiour hath *no right* to do it, so if they should submit to it they should too easily part with *that Liberty*, which God hath left them, and with which *Christ hath made them free*. This makes this thing necessary to a Churches unity & peace, and the not leaving things of this nature in that state wherein it hath seemed good to the wisdom of God to leave them in, this seems a deviation from the Divine Rule. Because it is a deviation from the practice of all the *good Kings of Gods ancient people*, and the practice of *Paul* and the *Apostles*, who instead of determining the liberty God gave the *Jews* for a time, as to the practice or not practice of the *ceremonial usages* strongly asserted it, and reflected upon those converted *Jews* that condemned some of their brethren, or the Christians of the *Gentiles*, for their using such a liberty. This very thing hath been a bone of contention amongst us for more than an hundred years, nor do I see any way to our unity, but our return to the Divine Rule in this thing; Superiours have a full work, and more than we could ever see universally well done, to enforce the commands of God upon people that will not take upon them those easy yokes, and need not incumber themselves or their Subjects consciences, where it hath pleased the all-wise God to leave them at liberty. A man may keep a day holy to the Lord, and give God thanks, another may not keep it to the Lord.



and yet give God thanks. The Apostle determines so when God hath left men two ways by either of which they may equally honour God, why should men leave them but one? Just Liberty and Unity are inseparable things, as well in matters of Religion as in civil matters: Oh! that this thing so much concerning our peace, might not upon this opportunity be hid from our Eyes.

2. A Second thing whereby we have somented divisions by a deviation from the Divine Rule, is by judging and censuring anothers Servants. Who art thou (saith the Apostle Rom. 14. 4.) that judgest another mans Servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth. In civil and secular things, men may be the Servants of men, but in matters of Conscience men are only the Servants of God; the fear of God must not be learned by the mere precepts of men, what a common thing hath it been with us, to judge and censure our brethren in these cases, as Schismatics, ungovernable, rebellious, &c. Those that use these methods have not known the way of peace. And till we return to the Apostles rule, Rom. 14. 13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling Block or an occasion to fall in his Brothers way; I can look for no Unity; When we can leave judging and censuring, reviling, and speaking evil of our Brethren, of the same Religion, and Nation, as going in the broad way to Hell, because they go in a narrower way toward Heaven than we judge necessary, or because they just tread not in the prints of our Feet, (observing still their faces Sion-ward) we may hope for something of Unity. But while such uncharitable thoughts, and speeches continue amongst us, as if we had a monopoly of the Holy Spirit of God, I cannot but expect they should naturally produce all kind of uncharitable actions. Oh! that we could remember what the Apostle hath taught us, Jam. 4. 12. that in matters of Conscience. There is but one Law-giver

Rom. 14.4.

Rom. 14.  
13.

Jam. 4. 12.



given who is able to save, and to destroy; and will last  
 about that judgest another. If we would but see it, we  
 have most of us something of the worst of Popery with-  
 in us, viz. arrogating to our selves an infallibility with  
 this difference to our disadvantage. The *Papists* claim it  
 only for the *Pope*. We would every one have it for our  
 selves, or at least for all Superiours, for if thou beest not  
 infallible, how comest thou to judge thy Brother, who  
 hath as much right to judge thee, as thou hast to judge,  
 and censure him. The Judgment of *Prophaneness*, *De-  
 bauchery*, *Blasphemy*, *Idolatry*, and *Heresy* too (in mat-  
 ters necessary to be believed in order to Salvation) is ea-  
 sie; but the Judgment of *Schism*, *Hypocrisie*, *Overmuch  
 preciseness* is not so easie. The guilt of those things, de-  
 pends much upon the Complexion of the particular  
 Conscience, and should be left unto him who searcheth  
 the Heart, and tryeth the Reins of Men.

3. A third thing, whereby we have fomented Divi-  
 sions by a Deviation from the Divine Rule, *Is a not walk-  
 ing together in things wherein we are agreed, because of  
 some things in which we are not agreed.* That we may  
 walk together in nothing, because we are not agreed  
 in all things, is one of the wildest and most dividing No-  
 tions a Christian can entertain, directly contrary to the  
 Apostolical Rule; *Phil. 3. 16. Nevertheless, whereunto we* *Phil. 3. 16.*  
*have already attained, let us walk by the same Rule; let*  
*us mind the same thing.* He walks with his Brother far  
 enough, who walks with him as far as the shoes of the  
 Gospel will carry him; and he is very uncharitable, who  
 because his Brother is willing to walk this one Mile with  
 him, will force him to walk two. I mean as far as every  
 (or *oportuna* *schim*) Ordinance of Man would carry him.

4. A fourth thing is an *over-eagerness to propagate our  
 own particular Opinions.* There are very few Christians  
 but have their *own* *doctrines*, their particular Opinions,  
 and

Rom. 14.  
22.

and Judgments in some things, not necessary to be believed or done in order to Salvation, but every Christian is not bound to propagate such Notions, especially if the Unity and Peace of a Church will be broken and endangered by it. This is plainly the Apostles Rule. *Hast thou Faith?* that is, hast thou a Persuasion of the truth of a Notion, wherein the generality of the Church wherewith thou walkest differeth from thee? *Have it to thy self before God,* Keep thy particular Notion to thy self, and live up to it in the presence of God, but do not for it disturb the Peace and Unity of others. Every Proposition of Truth is not of that moment, as to ballance the breach of a Churches Peace and Unity. It is a strange eagerness we shall observe in some to propagate an Opinion wherein they differ from others, and what a stress they lay upon it, as if no Salvation were to be had without their Faith, no Communion to be kept with any otherwise minded to them, this will perpetuate division to the Worlds end.

Prov. 3. 5.

5. A 5<sup>th</sup> Error of Men hath been caused by a deviation of men from that Rule which Solomon gives us, *Prov. 3. 5. Lean not too much to thine own understanding.* Humility will teach us to think that others may have the Spirit of God as well as we, and nothing but *Pride* can prompt us to think that we are the only Persons that cannot be deceived. It is true every one must so far lean upon his own understanding, as to live and walk according to the dictate of his own Conscience and speak, and act, as he believeth, but he is not so far to lean upon it, as to censure, and condemn all those that are not of his mind.

Eph. 4. 15.

6. A sixth Error, which hath broken our Unity, hath been our *contending for truth*, but *not in love*. This is also contrary to the Apostles Precept *and be subject in adoration, Truthing in love*, that is, maintaining the Truth, or practicing what you judge Truth in Love. Some  
Men

Men indeed are in love of their Notion, that they will not endure a word to be said against them, this is an over-soundness; but there are many that cannot bear a *disturbing* them, or *reviling* them for maintaining such a Notion, or being of such a Party. If a man *strive* (saith the Apostle) he is not *Crowned*, except he *strive lawfully*. To gain a truth with the loss of love, is a very ill Victory. If the Notion of Truth be not such as Salvation and Damnation depends upon an assent to, or a dissent from it. Nor is there more need of quarrels in these strivings, than there is of Mens Enmity one to another, because they are enforced to try a title at Law one with another, whiles one Man thinks an Estate is his right, which the other judgeth his, which would make all going to Law a very sinful thing. But there is no need of any such Enmity, while both are or should consent to this. That they desire the Estate may be his whole the Legal right is; whiles in this case all Christians desire that the *Truth of God might prevail*. What is their arguing and disputing, but a *Trial* at the Bar of Scripture and Reason, what is Truth in the case? what needs any breach of Charity for this? If (which all will pretend to) men did sincerely desire that what is *truth* might obtain; but the mischief is bottomed in Mens *insincerity* in those pretences, and unwillingness to be convicted.

7. A seventh deviation from the Divine Rule, which hath caused our breaches, is a not bearing *one anothers Infirmities*, directly contrary to the Apostles determination, Rom. 15. 1. *We then that are strong ought to bear the Infirmities of the weak, and not to please our selves.* All Men have their Infirmities, some in their *understanding*, some in their *Passions*, every one cannot apprehend things that are true, with that clearness as others can, contrary to the judgment of their own Consciences, in the things of God they cannot act; What then? must

Rom. 15. 1.

## The Happiness of Brethrens Dwelling

we therefore hate them and malign them and seek their ruin? is thus a bearing with their Infirmities. Besides, there are many Propositions of Truth, the Truth of which will not be evident till the Day of Judgment, and that day will determine in such cases who are the strong and who the weak. But Men are so for *pleasing themselves*, that they can bear no Contradictions, no Disputings of their Sentiments. Hence are the breaches of this Unity which produce so much unhappiness to a People, as the maintaining of it would produce happiness.

Rom. 16.  
17.

8. I shall add but one thing more. That is, A not marking those who unnecessarily *make divisions, and avoiding them*. This is also contrary to the Apostles rule, *Rom. 16. 17.—Mark them which make divisions amongst you, contrary to the Doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.* Those make unnecessary divisions, that divide where no Law of God obligeth them to divide, to secure the peace of their own Consciences. A Man is obliged to follow the dictate of his own Conscience, and to do what that tells him. God's Word obligeth him to do, and to avoid what that tells him would be Sin unto him. All other Divisions are unnecessary. Now all these ought to be marked and avoided, as the common Enemies of Humane Society, a returning to those Rules which God's Word hath left us, is the only way I know to bring us to that Happiness, which the Union of Brethren will bring us to. I will add but 4 things more, which shall be more extensive, for the avoiding of breaches upon civil accounts and so conclude my Discourse.

1. Those that would dispose themselves to live in Unity one with another, must prepossess themselves with this. That there is none but must have their allowances. *Nemo sine crimine vivit.* (saith the Poet) *Optimus ille qui minimus argetur.* He is not the best Man, who hath no Faults, but he that hath fewest. He will hardly be able

to keep a Friend in the World, who hath not learn'd this, but resolves to quarrel with him upon every offence. Hence it is that the *forbearance* of one another is in Scripture pressed so often upon Christians as their duty, *Eph. 4. 2. Colos. 3. 13*, where *forgiving* one another is also added. He that cannot both *forbear* and *forgive*, will not long keep in *Unity* with any.

2. *Study Humility*, and a mean opinion of your selves. The humble Man is commonly reconciled to the world. Solomon tells us, That *only by pride cometh contention*. He that must exalt himself, and his own Sentiments, above all other Mens, will hardly find any but Flatterers long agreeing with him.

3. Avoid *Self seeking*. It is an admirable direction of the Apostle, *Let no man seek his own, but anothers wealth*, *1 Cor. 10. 24*. He that only seeketh himself, loveth himself alone, and must be contented to be loved by himself alone.

4. Above all, *Hatred, Malice, Envy*, and all peevish Passions must be mortified. The Apostle speaks of these as things which he supposeth all good Christians to have put off and mortified. Indeed they are all *works of the Flesh*, directly opposite to this work and fruit of the Spirit. I shall now conclude, Begging of God to bring us to such a temper, that we may arrive at such an Happiness.

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